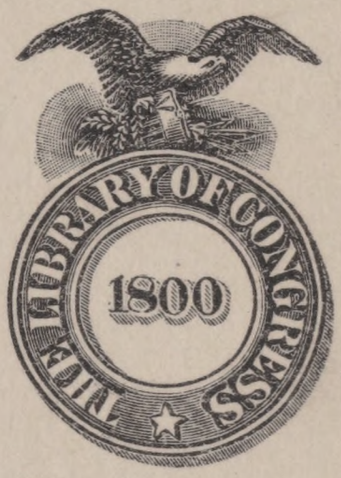
PZ
3
.B873
L

FT MEADE
GenColl

"Light Ho, Sir!"

Frank T. Bullen



Class PZ3

Book .B873L

Copyright No.

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

"LIGHT HO, SIR!"

"LIGHT HO, SIR!"

BY

FRANK T. BULLEN

AUTHOR OF "CRUISE OF THE CACHALOT"

NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.
PUBLISHERS

PZ3
.B873L

THE LIBRARY OF
CONGRESS,
TWO COPIES RECEIVED
OCT. 26 1901
COPYRIGHT ENTRY
oct 1-1901
CLASS a XXc. NO.
18109
COPY B.

Copyright, 1901,
By THOMAS Y. CROWELL & COMPANY.

CONTENTS

PAGE

LIGHT HO, SIR! 7

MY NIGHT WATCH IS OVER 21

"LIGHT HO, SIR!"

THOSE people who are always striving to trace back to a man's early training or surroundings the real reason for any startling change in his life after he has long grown up, and do not believe in what the Bible calls the New Birth, must often be sorely puzzled. They seek for that which they wish to find, and often ignore any evidence which militates against their preconceived theories. Yet the majority of them would be horrified were they told that this method of research is dishonest and misleading.

But in spite of what people may feel about the matter, it is of no use blinking the fact that very much of the so-called scientific investigation (which is not commercial) that is pursued to-day is tainted with this radical defect. Especially is this so in matters of inquiry into

religious experience. There are many exceedingly clever and well-educated persons who would have their readers believe that in all cases where a man or woman has become a Christian, and from serving the devil has turned and consistently served God, the change has been due to early impressions, which, accidentally encrusted over for a term, have been suddenly revived in all their pristine force, and have compelled the mind back into the channels in which it was originally taught to move.

Now, if this were all that these reasoners said, one might remind them, or inform them gently, that they were only partially right — that while it is undoubtedly blessedly true that early influences for good do exert themselves most forcefully and unexpectedly in after years in a large number of cases, yet it is most untrue and God-dishonoring to suggest that Christianity is purely a matter of education, of environment, of a long acquaintance with religious persons and matters. So far from this being the case, it is a truism with Christian workers that very frequently their most hopeful converts have

been those who never heard the Gospel before, or at least had never listened to it with the slightest attention, even though they may have actually caught the tones of the preacher's voice. To such simple ones the Water of the Word of Grace comes like the monsoon rains upon the burnt-up breadths of India, causing the apparently dead soil to put on at once a glorious garment of living green, life-giving, life-sustaining, beautifying and blessing all around it.

One of the most striking instances of this wonderful work of God in the soul that has ever come under my notice is that of a sailor who, strange as it may seem to-day, had never, until the time of which I speak, received the remotest idea of the relations of God to man, and had not the faintest conception of religion of any kind. Born in the squalid slums of a Lancashire town nearly sixty years ago, he became at a very early age a waif of the streets, losing all recollection of who were his parents, as they had forgotten all about him. It is hardly possible to conceive of a mind more perfectly desert than was John Wilson's. Reading and writing were of course

out of the question, and it is probable that any mental operations that went on in his dark mind were more nearly related to brute instincts than to any of the ordinary processes of human reasoning.

Now it is no part of my present plan, even if I had the necessary material, to trace Johnny's career from the gutters of —— until he found himself in the position of boy on board a North Country collier brig, being then, as he supposed, about thirteen years of age. By some inherited tenacity of constitution he had survived those years of starvation, cold, and brutality, and was, upon going to sea, like a well-seasoned rattan, without an ounce of superfluous flesh upon him, and with a capacity for stolid endurance almost equalling a Seminole Indian.

Of kindness he knew nothing, and had any one shown him any disinterested attention, he would have been as alarmed as are the birds in a London garden when a lover of them goes out to scatter crumbs. He would have suspected designs upon his liberty, or something worse. Of the treatment he endured on board those

East Coast colliers I do not dare to speak at present. The recital would, I know, arouse an almost frantic feeling of resentment that such things should have been possible such a handful of years ago, and readers would forget that, by the blessing of God, men's hearts to-day, even in the lowest strata of our society, have been marvellously softened towards children. He learned many things on board those ships, he told me, but, so far as he knew, not one that was good. Blasphemy, drunkenness, cruelty, debauchery — all these he became an adept in as he grew up, and besides he knew every conceivable trick by means of which he could shirk duty and shift it on to the shoulders of others.

At last he reached the dignity of able seaman, but I can bear witness that a less useful able seaman than he never darkened the door of a shipping office. And why? Because he had devoted all his low animal cunning to the avoidance of learning anything, lest he should be compelled to put it into practice, at the cost of some trouble to himself; and what he was compelled to know he purposely practised as

badly as possible, so that he should seldom be called upon to do it. Briefly, and in order to put the finishing touches to this unattractive picture, he was almost as perfect a specimen of unmoral animal as any course of training for the purpose of producing such an undesirable human being could have resulted in.

In this manner he passed the years of his life up to the age of thirty, drifting, like a derelict log, from ship to ship, and from shore to shore, all round the world. He was conversant with the interiors of most of the seaport jails in the world, for when under the influence of drink he was a madman, only to be restrained from doing deeds of violence by force, and utterly careless of the consequences of any of his actions. At last, in the course of his wanderings, he came to Calcutta, and was enticed by a shipmate up to the Sailors' Rest in the Radha Bazaar one Sunday evening, when he had neither money nor credit wherewith to get drink. His shipmate was a Christian of very brief experience, but he had the root of the matter in him, and knew that the next best thing to preaching the

Gospel one's self was to bring one's friends in contact with some one who could. So it came about that Harry Carter, finding Johnny wandering about the bazaars aimlessly and hungrily, proposed a feed to him, and by that means got him into the Rest, where, after his hunger was appeased, Harry succeeded in keeping him until the evening meeting.

At that time the meetings were conducted by two American missionaries to whom it was a perfect delight to listen, as they told in quaint language, loved and comprehended by sailors, the wonderful story of the coming of Jesus to save poor fallen man. Theirs was not preaching in a general way — every man in their presence felt that he was being individually conversed with, felt that the story of the Cross was a simple narration of absolute fact, no mere theory of mysterious import, which only men and women who were specially selected and educated for the purpose could ever hope to understand. They told the wonderful tale in manly fashion, letting the God-given message just flow through them on its way from their Father to their brethren.

And Johnny sat with eyes astare and mouth agape, as the straight, brave, certain words sank into his awakening mind. Wonder, incredulity, shame — all struggled within him, all newly born, for it could hardly be said with truth that he had ever realized any of these emotions before.

At last the speaker said: "Oh, my dear boys, some of you here have never known what it is to have a friend, yet there has been a Friend by your side always, only begging you to be a friend of His. Some of you have never had a home, yet this Friend has been for nearly two thousand years preparing a home for you that is beyond all your hopes, beyond everything that you can imagine. Some of you have never in your lives had any real joy; this Friend has in His right hand for you pleasures for evermore, and in His presence there is fulness of joy. He can and will do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. All these wonderful privileges may be yours for the taking; you haven't even to ask for them — only say that you will accept them."

Other sweet words followed, but Johnny

hardly heard them. In his dark soul there was such a turmoil as he had never before known. New needs, new desires were struggling for expression, and when the preacher dismissed his congregation with the earnest invitation for any to remain behind who felt they would like to know more about this wonderful gift, Johnny sat still in his place with wide, starting eyes following every movement of the preacher.

At last that good man, passing from bench to bench, came to Johnny, and at once saw that here was no ordinary seeker after peace. Laying one arm tenderly across Johnny's bowed shoulders, and with the other hand taking one of the seaman's gnarled and knotted hands, the missionary said, "Brother, let Him have you. He wants you to be happy, He does want your love. Jesus, gentle Jesus, died for you that you might be happy with Him for all eternity."

With a vehemence that was startling Johnny turned and said, "Does He know me?"

"Yes, better than you do," said the preacher.

"And He 's got all these things for me? I 'll work all the rest o' th' voy'ge but what I 'll have

this — I don't care what it costs me, I 'll have it. You see if I don't. I know now it 's what I been wantin' all my life."

"Gently, my dear brother," said the preacher, "you can't buy it. He bought it with His blood to give it to you, and you can't pay anything for it."

"Why, I never had anythink give me in my life," said Johnny. "'T ain't right. Everythink 's got ter be paid for, and I 'm going ter pay for this. I 'm no beggar, if I am a bit of a thief when I gets the chance."

Now, strange as it may seem, the hardest task that man of God had on that occasion was to convince this poor white savage that the gift of God *was* a gift. Gladly, joyfully, would he have sold himself into a long slavery to have purchased what he felt he must have, yet for a long time he would not, could not, believe that it was "without money and without price." At last despairingly he said: "Oh! won't He take a shillin' for it? I got one in my chest, a lucky shillin' with a hole in it I 've had for years. Let me go aboard an' get it."

At last, with great difficulty, he was convinced that buying salvation was impossible, but impressed with the fact that he himself was from henceforth bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God. And while the weary evangelist was still toiling to explain, the Lord took the matter in His own hands. And presently a joyful shout burst from Johnny's lips:

"Light ho, sir! I sees it all. He 's got me, an' He'll never let me go. Oh! why did n't I know of this afore?"

He was a saved man. Let those argue who will, dispute who can, Johnny Wilson was a standing proof of the power of God to save the most ignorant, the most callous of the sons of men. From that day forward, without any more teaching, save what he could get from any one who would read the Gospels to him, he grew in grace. He was no more trouble aboard. His work was always done to the best of his ability, and you could safely trust him to work by himself, for, as he said: "My Jesus is alonger me alwus."

Oh, but he was a real saint! Nothing could

move him. He used to be hated by everybody — now he became the spoiled child of the fo'c'stle, at least in intent, for really he was unspoilable; but all hands, no matter what they thought, conspired to love Johnny. And when on the subsequent voyage he died of a blow received in falling from aloft, all hands gathered round his bunk, to hear from him the story that had transformed his life. He gushed it out with his latest breath:

"Jesus Christ, God's Son, come down from heaven to look for me an' make me happy. I was n't worth a rope-yarn to anybody, but He come and found me, an' made me so glad. An' now I 'm a-goin' ter see Him. Dear Jesus Christ, the friend of pore devils like me."

"MY NIGHT WATCH IS OVER"

"MY NIGHT WATCH IS OVER."

A SAILOR'S CONVERSION.

SITTING upon the capstan in the centre of the fo'c's'le-head of a huge four-masted ship rushing swiftly along the wide, wild stretch of the Southern Ocean, bound to England round Cape Horn, a young able seaman in the prime of life was engaged in the unusual mental exercise for seamen of meditating upon God. His name does not matter; it must be sufficient to say that he was brought up in a respectable middle-class home in the north of England, one of a family of seven, — four boys and three girls. He had been christened at the parish church, attended Sunday school and family prayers with the utmost regularity, and had been confirmed at an early age. In spite of occasional outbreaks of wildness, he had won prizes for ex-

emplary conduct at Sunday-school, and had felt, with the mistaken idea of so many, when he received them, as if somebody were trying to bribe him to give up all the fun in life and become a strait-laced, long-visaged humbug. But he also felt, thank God! that in his life there were two solid facts that could never be explained away, standing up like bastions of native rock in his life, — the love of his mother and the kindness of his father.

All that he heard in church and Sunday-school was readily relegated by him to the category of things that ought to be done, even if you couldn't see the use of them; but as to trying to understand them, well, that was the merest nonsense. Not that he ever put these thoughts and feelings into words, but they were none the less real to him.

Then, suddenly, without any previous preparation discernible by him, a foreign element came into his life. Coming home from the village school one afternoon (he was then thirteen years old), he met a bronzed, weather-beaten man who inquired of him the way to a

L. of C.

neighboring town; and as that way for some little distance happened to be his own, they walked together. Within ten minutes the boy had imbibed from the wayfarer an intense desire to go a-roving. For the weather-beaten stranger was a sailor returning home after an absence of many years; and the plain recital of his adventures, without any attempt to enhance their interest, fired the country boy's blood to such an extent that his breath came in short gasps, and he gazed at the seamed and sunburnt face beside him as if he could see in it some reflection of the wondrous scenes through which it had passed apparently unheeding. They parted; but the boy, his brain all in a ferment with wonder and desire, returned to his home as one that treads the clouds. And that night he waylaid his father, saying stammeringly: "Dad, I want to go to sea."

Now the father, although a home-keeping man, had long faced the probability of losing his nestlings as soon as they felt their wings growing, the more since he knew well that opportunities for their attaining any position worth consider-

ing in the small town of their birth would almost certainly be wanting. Moreover, he had a severe struggle to keep them in comfort on his very small though constant earnings, and any lightening of his burden, even though in the process his heart-strings were strained, was to be welcomed. But as each child had been born to him he had commended it unreservedly to the care of his Heavenly Father, whose love to him had been the pivot of his own life ever since he was sixteen years old. And so it came about that, after a touching scene with his mother, the boy was helped to his desire, and by the most heroic efforts on the part of his father he found himself, six months after giving utterance to his wish, a member of the apprentice portion of the crew of a huge four-masted ship, bound from Liverpool to San Francisco.

His first month at sea was a revelation to the country-bred lad. In place of the home hedged in by love, into which the foulnesses so prevalent in great cities never penetrated, he found himself met at every point by profanity and worse. In place of having all his bodily needs cared for,

all the decencies of life made easy for him, he was left to his own ignorant devices, and all the dreadful consequences of being his own master in his own time descended upon him without warning. The captain was a careless, callous man, who only looked upon the apprentices as an inefficient supplement to a scanty crew. And while he worked them mercilessly in consequence, he found it no part of his duty to look after the welfare of either their bodies or their souls.

Under this treatment the boy soon became a finished young blackguard in thought, and so soon as the opportunity arrived to put the evil theories he had so readily absorbed into practice, he flung himself into all forms of evil within his reach with a recklessness and zest that were horrible to contemplate. Finally, he ran away from his ship in company with an older apprentice, breaking his indentures, and cutting off definitely the last hold his home had upon him.

A wild time of sin, suffering, and sorrow followed. Yes, sorrow; although, in the same Spartan fashion practised by so many thousands

of wanderers like himself, he concealed it under an assumption of utter indifference, utter godlessness. At last, when in the throes of a prolonged debauch he was staggering along one of the lowest streets in Callao, he was seized by a gang of predatory ruffians, beaten out of what little sense he had left, and conveyed on board an American ship bound thence to England. This is the process called by seamen "Shanghai-ing."

It would be impossible to convey to people living sheltered lives on shore how terrible were the physical sufferings of the poor lad now, bruised from head to heel, shaking from illness brought on by his excesses, yet compelled to toil in superhuman fashion under pain of being savagely beaten again. But he felt no repentance, he only cursed his "luck," and dumbly endured, as seamen do. Then one night, during the keeping of his lookout, one of his watchmates whom he had hitherto despised as a mild, say-nothing-to-nobody sort of a duffer, came quietly up on to the forecastle head, and, standing near him, gazed steadfastly out upon the loneliness of the midnight ocean,

for some time saying not a word. The full moon had just emerged from a dense black cloud, driving before her, apparently, the darkness that had so recently reigned, and paling the lustrous stars with her glorious radiance, while every tiny wavelet rippling the peaceful sea became instantly edged with molten silver. And the influence of the hour, amid all the eternal immensity of the environment, made for breathless awe, silent involuntary worship of the unseen yet palpably present God.

Suddenly the new-comer spoke quietly, yet with a certain force, as if unable to hold his peace any longer. "Jemmy, lad, don't ye feel as if we was a-sailing inter the very presence of Almighty God — as if He wanted t' show men 'at won't think, how glorious He is, an' how great is His peace?"

There was no reply, but as the speaker paused to look for the effect of his words, he saw glittering in the moon-ray two big drops stealing down Jemmy's sorrow-seamed young face.

Immediately the Christian, following his Master's example, took a quick stride to the

youth, and laying his hand upon the trembling shoulder, said softly: "Dear boy, let 'em run. They 're a sign that your heart ain't got too hard yet to feel the sweet influence that God puts out to win His wandering ones back. But if there 's anything I can do to help you, do let me, won't you?"

He came nearer as he spoke, until his arm was round Jemmy's neck. And then he waited patiently until the broken words came: "I — I — feel so miserable. I 've forgotten my mother and father, my home and my God. But p'raps I never knew Him."

"No, dear boy, I don't suppose you ever did; but now is your time to know Him. He 's been waiting for your proud heart to bend down and own that it wants Him — can't do without Him. Oh, Jemmy, how He loves you! Your mother and father love you, and are heart-broken over you, no doubt, but He, your Father God, loves you from everlasting to everlasting, and spared not His own Son, that you might be made welcome to His peace, that you might know how happy a child of God can be who

has found out from God Himself how much He is longed and waited for."

The speaker paused for breath, for his energetic outburst had so carried him away that he was like a man who had been running a race, and as he did so Jemmy said shyly, and in a low voice: "How did you know that I was wishing with all my heart that in some way, somehow, I might get my soul put right, that I was longin' for a message from God, without any idea how it was to come?"

There was a happy ring in the Christian's voice as he answered: "Me know? I don't know anything, except that God the Father is my Father, that God the Son is my Saviour, who died that I might live, and that God the Holy Ghost, whose work it is to impress these wonderful matters on men's hearts, is always at hand arranging the time, the messenger, and the message. He found me as He finds you — hopeless, heart-sick, hungry for peace and love; and as soon as He made me feel my need of Him He had some one there to tell me the glad story."

Then and there Jemmy slid down to his knees,

and lifting his streaming face to heaven he murmured, "O God my Father, forgive me my sins, and make me what I ought to be. Dear Jesus, put your own precious life into me and drive the unclean life out. I do believe in you, my Saviour, because you compel me to by your love. Teach me your way — I 'll make it mine. Bless my poor father and mother at home, and let me get back and comfort them; and bless this dear brother here who you 've made use of to tell me, for Christ's sake. Amen."

Deep and solemn was the response from his new-found friend kneeling beside him. As they rose from their knees Jemmy reached for his hand, and clasping it in both of his own, said brokenly, "How real and true all comes back to me now, what I heard when I was a little chap at home and at Sunday-school! How can I ever thank God enough for sending you to me? But how silly I must have been not to see it before! Oh, thank God, thank God I see it now! God my Father waiting for me, Christ my Saviour knocking at my heart, and the Comforter sending you into this place, on to this fo'c's'le-head

at the right minute to give me the right word."

"Eight bells" rang out clearly from the tiny bell aft, and as Jemmy hastened to strike the big bell responsively he murmured: "Thank God my night watch is over — the morning has come."

Thenceforward he and his brother in the Lord were inseparable, whenever it was possible for them to enjoy the communion they both needed. Their heavy tasks on board remained really the same, but they did not feel them. They worked cheerfully as unto God, upheld by His wonderful sustaining power, and everything around and about them seemed changed for the better.

So it is when, after long buffeting the gale that is blowing fair for home, because the captain is uncertain of his position and dares not run before it, the pilot comes on board, orders the helm to be put up, and the good ship fleeing homeward with a fair wind seems to have suddenly sprung into fine weather. Jesus, the Heavenly Pilot, comes on board of a man and takes charge, bringing light for darkness, joy for misery, and,

embracing all these, the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

Night after night found Jemmy as we found him at the beginning of this story, day after day saw him sturdily and more deeply digging into the treasure of the Word, until that blessed day when with his beloved chum at his side he burst into the old home, to receive that welcome that only a loving mother and father can give to a son restored to them by God's mercy in answer to many prayers.

NOV 13 1901

OCT 26 1901

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00015004228